

## **OVERVIEW**

**Federal Agency Name:** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water within the Office of Water

**Funding Opportunity Title:** Cooperative Agreement for the Development and Coordination of a National Environmental Laboratory Network

**Announcement Type:** Request for Applications (RFA)

**Funding Opportunity Number:** EPA-OW-OGWDW-05-01

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number:** 66.424

**Dates:** Applications must be submitted by May 16, 2005 (See Section IV for further information on submission dates and times).

## **Section I. Funding Opportunity Description**

### ***A. Background***

Improving the security of our nation's drinking water and wastewater infrastructure has become a top priority since the events of 9/11/01. Significant actions are underway to assess and reduce vulnerabilities to potential terrorist attacks; to plan for and practice responses to emergencies and incidents; to develop new security technologies; to detect and monitor contaminants and prevent security breaches; and to enhance the capability and capacity of the nation's laboratories to continually improve their effectiveness and efficiency in analyzing a surge of potentially contaminated environmental samples.

### ***B. Project Description***

This funding opportunity seeks to enhance the capacity and capability of environmental laboratories to respond to emergencies and potential terrorist attacks by 1) maximizing laboratory organization to handle a surge in environmental samples 2) developing water and general environmental laboratory methods and 3) facilitating the development/dissemination of tools to increase laboratory effectiveness. The successful applicant will assume a leadership role in expanding knowledge of water and general environmental laboratory administration and improve the capacity of laboratories to analyze the human health impact of environmental chemical exposure.

EPA anticipates awarding a cooperative agreement of approximately \$600,000 to address the following priority topic areas: serve as a National Point of Contact for state environmental laboratory membership in the Center for Disease Control (CDC) Laboratory Response Network; establish a National Environmental Laboratory "Home Base"; and organize and sponsor conferences/task forces/workgroups and training. Applications submitted must address approaches to all priority topic areas that facilitate the development of guidance, communications, and tools to increase nationwide environmental testing processes and procedures.

### ***C. Goals and Objectives***

A cooperative agreement will be awarded under the "research, technical assistance, information, and training of personnel" elements of SDWA § 1442(c)(3). The activities to be funded under

this RFA are consistent with EPA's Strategic Plan, Goal 2 (Clean and Safe Water), Objective 2.1 Protect Human Health, which calls for "Protect[ing] Human Health by reducing exposure to contaminants in drinking water (including protecting source waters) in fish and shellfish, and in recreational waters. The successful applicant must deliver products (outputs) that support efforts to meet longer term environmental results (outcomes).

The expected outputs of the cooperative agreement are: the establishment of a central lead network which can coordinate resources as well as develop/enhance environmental laboratory capabilities; coordinated efforts to provide maximum protection of human health in the event of a terrorist attack; a plan for practice responses to emergencies and incidents; and development of new security technologies which detect and monitor contaminants and prevent security breaches. The expected outcome of the cooperative agreement is to enhance the capability and capacity of the nation's environmental laboratories to continually improve their effectiveness and efficiency in analyzing a surge of potentially contaminated environmental samples.

#### ***D. Priority Topic Areas***

The Priority Topic Areas outline the three functional areas the grantee will establish within the environmental laboratory membership to facilitate development of guidance, communications, and tools to increase nationwide environmental testing processes and procedures. Applications must address approaches to each of the following Priority Topic Areas:

##### **1. Serve as a National Point of Contact**

Serve as a National Point of Contact for environmental laboratory membership in the CDC Laboratory Response Network. The National Point of Contact will serve as a liaison between CDC Laboratory Response Network staff and environmental laboratory staff to assure smooth operation of the network. The National Point of Contact role includes:

- A. Assuming a leadership role in expanding knowledge of environmental laboratory administration and improve the capacity of laboratories to analyze the human health impact of environmental chemical exposure.
- B. Providing interface for environmental laboratories concerning Laboratory Response Network operations and planning.
- C. Coordinating with the Director of Infectious Diseases and Preparedness and the Environmental Health Program Manager to implement environmental recommendations from the 50 state chemical terrorism assessment completed in March 2003.
- D. As new national policies are developed and new partnerships are formed, promoting awareness of the National Laboratory Training Network's capabilities and promote training opportunities.
- E. Over the project period, assessing the ongoing status of environmental laboratory capabilities and disseminate findings to established Enin reports, briefs and Web articles as appropriate.

##### **2. Establish a National Environmental Laboratory "Home Base"**

Establish a national environmental laboratory home base building upon CDC's existing Laboratory Response Network. Form strategic partnerships with governmental and non-governmental agencies and professional organizations to assist in overcoming barriers to effectively and efficiently promote communications between the regulatory and health protection sectors. The network, once established, will use these relationships to enhance communication and linkages between environmental labs and clinical, environmental, agriculture, and veterinary laboratories, as well as epidemiology-laboratory linkages. The national environmental laboratory home base will serve to:

- A. Expand the role of environmental labs in research and development, evaluation and validation of technology and procedures and improve the use of laboratory information in guarding against environmental threats.
- B. Develop, analyze, and disseminate information related to enhancing environmental laboratory capabilities, capacities, and needed enhancements.
- C. Coordinate technology transfer efforts from EPA and other federal agencies to Environmental Laboratories.
- D. Provide a venue for environmental laboratory stakeholders to submit recommendations and review federal documents related to laboratory enhancement.
- E. Coordinate delineation of capacity needs with environmental laboratory representatives.
- F. Define core capacities for environmental laboratories.
- G. Coordinate reporting systems of environmental labs for comparison of analytical results and capabilities.
- H. Effectively and efficiently promote communications between the regulatory and health protection sectors established to protect public health from chemical and microbial contaminants in the environment.

### **3. Organize and Sponsor Conferences/Task Forces/Workgroups and Training**

Organize and sponsor conferences/task forces/workgroups and training at a national level and encourage network members and staff participation in relevant meetings and conferences, including travel and preparation of presentations. Generally, meeting topics will include:

- A. Develop or discuss guidelines and recommendations on environmental laboratory capacity, quality laboratory practices, and current issues in laboratory science.
- B. Exchange knowledge, build communities of practice and promote the role of environmental labs.
- C. Convene partner meetings with governmental agencies and professional groups on issues of importance to environmental laboratory practice.
- D. Develop and implement environmental training programs for all environmental laboratories.
  - (1) Provide training and other resources to address knowledge and capacity gaps.
  - (2) Assist in planning and delivery of didactic courses and "wet" workshops. (Provide training through effective partnerships with EPA, CDC, the National Laboratory Training Network, and other organizations as appropriate.)

Funding will be provided for the following yearly products resulting from the above priority topic areas.

**Year (1) Products:**

1. Develop and implement membership application/agreement for sentinel reference and national environmental labs.
2. Coordinate select agent registration to enhance analyte/laboratory capacity.
3. Define environmental data reporting "requirements".
4. Provide a venue for environmental laboratory stakeholders to submit recommendations and review federal documents related to laboratory enhancement.
5. Assess the capabilities of environmental laboratories in the U.S. and identify opportunities for enhancements.
6. Conduct not more than three Network Training conferences on topics referenced in priority topic area 3.
7. Coordinate and conduct a National Conference.

**Year (2) Products:**

1. Develop recommendations from the 50 state chemical terrorism assessment completed in March 2003.
2. Identify barriers to implementation of new technology and protocols, assist in collecting information and developing strategies to overcome barriers at the federal, state and local level.
3. Assess exposure to chemicals present in water.
4. Conduct a study of methods for agent analysis of environmental samples to determine if there are serious inadequacies as well as needed improvements in worker safety and facility security.
5. Conduct not more than three Network Training conferences on topics referenced in priority topic area 3.
6. Coordinate and conduct a National Conference.

**Year (3) Products:**

1. Develop programs which support biomonitoring capacity building for environmental laboratories.
2. Develop web-based resources (list serves, web boards, on-line resource center) for sharing technical information.
3. Develop, monitor, and promote use of traditional (directories) and on-line (databases, web pages, list serves, web boards, ORC) resources to facilitate exchange of programmatic and scientific information critical to public health laboratories and promote quality laboratory practices, such as environmental laboratory directors list serve.
4. Conduct not more than three Network Training conferences on topics referenced in

- priority topic area 3.
5. Coordinate and conduct a National Conference.

## **Section II. Award Information**

EPA anticipates awarding a cooperative agreement of approximately \$600,000 to establish a National Point of Contact for state environmental laboratory membership in the CDC LRN, establish a National Environmental Laboratory “Home Base”, and organize and sponsor conferences/task forces/workgroups and training. EPA will participate in the project activities and expects to have joint operational involvement and/or collaboration. The total projected period to carry out these activities will be no more than 3 years. **EPA reserves the right not to make any awards under this announcement.**

## **Section III. Eligibility Information**

### ***A. Eligible Applicants***

Assistance under this program is generally available to States, territories, Indian Tribes, and possessions of the U.S., including the District of Columbia, public and private universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, other public or private nonprofit institutions and individuals. Nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply.

### ***B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement***

There are no cost-sharing or matching requirements.

### ***C. Other - Threshold Criteria***

Applicants must conform to the application submission requirements described in Section IV.B. Additionally, applications must address approaches to each of the following Priority Topic Areas described in Section I.D: serve as a National Point of Contact; establish a National Environmental Laboratory “Home Base”; and organize and sponsor conferences/task forces/workgroups and training.

Applications that do not meet these threshold criteria will not be considered for funding.

## **Section IV. Application and Submission Information**

### ***A. Address to Request Application Package***

#### **Instructions for Electronic Application Submission**

Applicants are encouraged to submit applications electronically using [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) apply systems web site. In order to view the application package, you will need to download the PureEdge viewer (hyperlink available under “Get Started” then “Get Started Step 2”). You may then access the application package at [https://apply.grants.gov/forms\\_apps\\_idx.html](https://apply.grants.gov/forms_apps_idx.html) using either

the CFDA number of 66.424 or Funding Opportunity Number EPA-OW-OGWDW-05-01. It is recommended that you “Register to Receive Notification” of announcement updates.

The actual submission of your application must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with <http://www.grants.gov/> (most investigators will not be eligible to submit the application). Please see <http://www.grants.gov/>, “Get Started” for further information. ***The registration process may take a week or longer.*** Please check with your Sponsored Programs, or equivalent, office to locate your official representative and see if your institution is registered. If your institution is not currently registered, encourage your official representative to begin the process immediately.

Documents must be submitted in Adobe Acrobat PDF format to maintain format integrity. Please submit the required documents as described in Section IV. B.

### **Instructions for Paper Application Submission**

For paper copy submissions, the original and three (3) copies of the complete application (4 in all) **must be sent** by an overnight delivery or courier service to the address identified below:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
East Building, Room 2160M  
1201 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20004  
Attn: Joe A. Jackson  
Phone Number: (202) 564-3817

**Note:** Do NOT send applications via US Postal Service mail of any type. Applications sent via US Postal Service WILL NOT be accepted.

It should be noted that this schedule may be changed without prior notification due to factors that were not anticipated at the time of announcement. In the case of a change in the required receipt date, a new date will be posted on the WSD web site  
<http://cfpub.epa.gov/safewater/watersecurity/financeassist.cfm>.

The Application Kit for Federal Assistance is available at:  
[http://www.epa.gov/ogd/grants/how\\_to\\_apply.htm](http://www.epa.gov/ogd/grants/how_to_apply.htm) This website explains how to complete SF-424A Budget Forms and describes cost principles for a Federal grant. Requests for application kits may also be submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency, Grants Administration Division, 3903R, Washington, DC 20460.

### ***B. Content and Form of Application Submission***

Electronic transmittal of applications using the electronic applications package available at [http://apply.grants.gov/forms\\_apps\\_idx.html](http://apply.grants.gov/forms_apps_idx.html) is preferred to facilitate the review process. However, as mentioned above hard copies are acceptable and the required forms can be

downloaded from <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/forms/forms.htm>. Please send one original and three copies of the application if it is not electronically transmitted.

The application must contain the following components: required Federal and EPA forms (e.g., SF-424, SF424A Budget Sheet), a project narrative/workplan, and resumes. It is recommended that the project narrative/workplan does not exceed twelve numbered pages (8.5 x 11-inch) of single space text (excluding required Federal and EPA forms, detailed budget information, and resumes). Additional pages of information and/or materials will not be reviewed.

### **Project Narrative/Workplan**

*The project narrative/workplan must address each the following components:*

1. **Specialized Experience** – Describe your demonstrated experience working with members of the Laboratory Response Network and your understanding of issues specific to facilitating activities and communicating between environmental laboratories. In addition, describe in detail your direct or related experience with coordinating environmental and public health laboratory issues with the federal government. Finally, describe your experience and demonstrated success in providing laboratory tools and experience in facilitating communications between environmental laboratories.
2. **Technical Approach/Project Plan** – Discuss your organization's approach to addressing the Priority Topic Areas described in Section I.D. in the most efficient and cost-effective way. Specifically, explain how the Point of Contact function will interface with the state environmental laboratory membership in the CDC Laboratory Response Network to improve the capacity of environmental laboratories to analyze the human health impact of environmental chemical exposure. Explain your approach to establishing a National Environmental Laboratory "Home Base" and forming strategic partnerships within a National Environmental Laboratory Network with governmental and non-governmental agencies and professional organizations to assist in overcoming barriers to efficiently and effectively promote communications between regulatory and health protection sectors. Explain your approach to coordinating conferences, task forces, workgroups, and training to accomplish the following objectives: (1) improve state environmental laboratory membership capacity to analyze the human health impact of environmental chemical exposure and (2) develop strategic partnerships with governmental and non-governmental agencies and professional organizations. Discuss likely meeting locations, types of organizations to be invited to each meeting, process for summarizing discussions and gathering feedback from meeting participants, and how the collected information will be disseminated.

Describe your proposed plan of action for addressing the Year (1), Year (2), and

Year (3) products in the most efficient and cost-effective way. The time line for the entire 3-year period of the project must be developed in 12-month increments.

3. **Qualification of Key Personnel** – Provide names, phone numbers, business addresses, e-mail addresses, for Principle Investigator(s) and key associates. Describe the qualifications, experience, and availability of these personnel to perform the work.
4. **Past Performance** – Describe your past performance in effectively managing a federal assistance award (or non-federal assistance award if you do not have past performance in managing a federal assistance award). This should include disclosure of audit findings, cost disallowances, special terms and conditions, or any adverse actions relating to past performance on a federal assistance agreement (or non-federal agreement). Describe your organization's participation in projects of a similar nature to the priority topic areas discussed in Section I.D. which have been completed, currently in progress, or related experience which warrants consideration. Information other than that provided by the applicant may be used to evaluate applicant's past performance.
5. **Environmental Results** – Discuss the anticipated products (outputs) and environmental results (outcomes) and your organization's plan for tracking and measuring progress toward achieving the anticipated outputs and outcomes.

#### **Required Federal and EPA Forms**

*All applicants must submit the following:*

- **Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424)** The SF 424 is a standard Federal form to be used by applicants as a required cover sheet for this cooperative agreement program. NOTE: Block No. 10 requires a "Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance" (CFDA) number be entered. Use CFDA Number 66.424 for this assistance agreement program. Applicants will be required to provide a Dun and Bradstreet (D & B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. Organizations can receive a DUNS number, at no cost, by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or by visiting [www.dnb.com](http://www.dnb.com).
- **Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs (SF 424A)**

#### **Detailed Budget Information**

Provide detailed budget estimates, including travel, to support the SF 424A Budget Information.

#### **Resumes**

Provide one-page resumes for Principle Investigator(s) and key associates.

#### ***C. Submission Dates and Times***

Paper copy submissions must be received no later than 4:00 P.M. Eastern Time on May 16,



2005. Electronic applications must be transferred to <http://www.grants.gov/> no later than 4:00 P.M. Eastern Time on May 16, 2005. Applications submitted after this date will not be considered.

#### ***D. Intergovernmental Review***

The funds associated with this announcement require Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs,” review. E.O. 12372 structures the federal government’s system of consultation with states and local governments on its decisions involving grants, other forms of financial assistance, and direct development. Under E.O. 12372, states, in consultation with their local governments, design their own review process and select the federal financial assistance and direct development activities they wish to review. If selected for funding, the recipient of the federal assistance agreement will be required to send a copy of their application and proposal to the appropriate State Clearinghouse Office for an intergovernmental review, if applicable. (See: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>).

#### ***E. Funding Restrictions***

In accordance with EPA guidance and the OMB Circulars, as appropriate, the recipient must agree that it will not use assistance funds for lobbying, fund-raising or political activities (e.g., lobbying members of Congress, or lobbying for other federal grants, cooperative agreements or contracts). Construction is not an allowable activity, foreign travel is not permissible, equipment purchases require written permission by the EPA project officer if they were not included in the approved application. The terms and conditions of the formal assistance agreement may put additional and specific limitations on the funding.

#### ***F. Proprietary Information***

In accordance with 40 CFR 2.203, applicants may claim all or a portion of their application/proposal as confidential business information. EPA will evaluate confidentiality claims in accordance with 40 CFR Part 2. Applicants must clearly mark applications/proposals or portions of applications/proposals they claim as confidential. If no claim of confidentiality is made, EPA is not required to make the inquiry to the applicant otherwise required by 40 CFR 2.204(c)(2) prior to disclosure.

### **Section V. Application Review Information**

#### ***A. Criteria***

Applications will be evaluated and ranked according to the following evaluation criteria:

<b>EVALUATION CRITERIA</b>	<b>Weight (based on a 1000 pt. scale)</b>
<b>CRITERION ONE: Specialized Experience</b>	

<p>Demonstrated technical experience and ability to perform the work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–□ <b>75 points</b> - Experience working with members of the Laboratory Response Network and the Public Health/Environmental Laboratory Community, and the understanding of issues specific to facilitating activities and communicating between environmental laboratories.</li> <li>–□ <b>75 points</b> - Experience in coordinating environmental and public health laboratory issues with the federal government.</li> <li>–□ <b>50 points</b> - Experience and demonstrated success in providing laboratory tools.</li> <li>–□ <b>50 points</b> - Experience in facilitating communications between environmental laboratories.</li> </ul>	250 points
<b>CRITERION TWO: Technical Approach</b>	
<p>Merit of proposed methodology for addressing the Priority Topic Areas and products described in Section I.D. in the most efficient and cost-effective way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–□ <b>50 points</b> - Overall understanding and technical approach to establishing and operating as a Point of Contact with the CDC, Laboratory Response Network, and state environmental laboratory membership to improve laboratory capacity to analyze the human health impact of environmental chemical exposure.</li> <li>–□ <b>50 points</b> - Overall understanding and technical approach to establishing a National Environmental Laboratory “Home Base” and forming strategic partnerships with governmental and non-governmental agencies and professional organizations to assist in overcoming barriers to efficiently and effectively promote communications between regulatory and health protection sectors.</li> <li>–□ <b>50 points</b> - Overall understanding and technical approach to coordinating conferences, task forces, workgroups, and training.</li> <li>–□ <b>50 points</b> - Overall understanding and plan for accomplishing the Year (1), Year (2), and Year (3) products.</li> </ul>	200 points
<b>CRITERION THREE: Qualification of Key Personnel</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–□ <b>25 points</b> - Demonstrated availability, qualifications, and experience of the key associates.</li> <li>–□ <b>75 points</b> - Demonstrated availability, qualifications, and experience of the Principle Investigator(s).</li> </ul>	100 points
<b>CRITERION FOUR: Past Performance</b>	

Demonstrated ability to effectively manage a federal assistance award (or non-federal assistance award if the applicant has no past performance on federal assistance awards). Applicants with no past performance history in managing either a federal or non-federal assistance award will receive a neutral score for this factor.	200 points
<b>CRITERION FIVE: Environmental Results</b>	
Demonstrated ability to identify, track, and measure expected outputs and outcomes to be achieved under the assistance agreement.	250 points

### ***B. Review and Selection Process***

Each eligible application will be evaluated and ranked by a panel comprised of non-EPA peer reviewers. The review panel will base its evaluation on the evaluation criteria disclosed in Section V.A. Upon completion of the peer review evaluation, the peer review panel will submit reviewer comments, rankings, and summary reports to the EPA Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water, Water Security Division. Final funding decisions will be made by the Director of the Water Security Division.

### ***C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates***

All applicants will be notified by EPA Headquarters on whether or not the application has been selected for funding. The notification is not an authorization to begin performance. A notice signed by the Grants Administration Division is the authorizing document to the applicant to begin performance. EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards as a result of this RFA.

## **VI. Award Administration Information**

### ***A. Award Notices***

Final selection of the award recipient will be made by the Director, Water Security Division within the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by e-mail.

### ***B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements***

The general award and administration process for assistance agreements are governed by regulations at 40 CFR part 30 (Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations) and 40 CFR part 31 (States, Tribes, interstate agencies, intertribal consortia and local governments).

### ***C. Reporting***

Project monitoring and reporting requirements can be found in 40 CFR 30.50-30.54, 40 CFR 31.40-31.45 and 40 CFR 40.160. In general, recipients are responsible for managing the day-to-day operations and activities supported by the assistance funding, to assure compliance with applicable Federal requirements, and for ensuring that established milestones and performance

goals are being achieved. Performance reports and financial reports must be submitted quarterly and are due 30 days after the reporting period. The final report is due 90 days after the assistance agreement has expired. Recipients will be required to report direct and indirect environmental results that result from the work accomplished through the award.

#### ***D. Dispute Procedures***

Assistance agreement competition-related disputes will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures published in 70 FR (Federal Register) 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005) which can be found at

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20051800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2005/05-1371.htm>. Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting Joe A. Jackson at (202) 564-3817.

#### **VII. Agency Contact**

For further information regarding this RFA, contact Joe A. Jackson, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water, Washington, DC, 20460. Phone: (202) 564-3817. E-mail: [jackson.joe-a@epa.gov](mailto:jackson.joe-a@epa.gov)

#### **VIII. Other Information**

The EPA Grant Award Officer is the only official that can bind the Agency to the expenditure of funds for selected projects resulting from this announcement.